

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of the Claims

1-11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) A method of preventing ~~natural, artificial, or therapeutic material~~ nucleus pulposus in an intradiscal space from extruding through a defect in the annulus fibrosis, the annulus fibrosis having an outer layer and at least one inner layer, comprising the steps of:

inserting a ~~flexible device~~ no more than one implant into the defect in the annulus fibrosis, the implant comprising a flexible device having a structure with at least two appendages made from a shape-memory material;

advancing the flexible device distally beyond the outer layer in the annulus fibrosis; and

expanding the appendages of the flexible device by allowing the device to return to a memorized shape substantially larger than the defect in the outer layer of the annulus fibrosis,

wherein the flexible device prevents escape of the ~~natural, artificial, or therapeutic material~~ nucleus pulposus through the defect.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein:

the step of inserting the device includes compacting the device into a compressed form for introduction.

14-15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein the device includes a liquid or gel which solidifies following the insertion of the device.
17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the device includes a hydrogel or elastomer.
18. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the device occludes the defect while allowing compression and distraction of the disc with respect to normal spinal movement.
- 19-23. (Canceled)